# THE FLORIDA SWAMP.

Adventures in the Morass of the Wacissa.

### DISMAL SCENES.

The Correspondent and His Party in a Den of Reptiles.

HOW THEY ESCAPED.

Encounter with a Youthful Alligator.

RESCUE OF A NEGRO.

Discovery of a Group of Islands Hitherto Unknown.

#### THE STONE IDOL.

SINK O' PINHOOKS, Fla., Feb. 12, 1877. impression upon me, despite their palpable exaggeration and possible invention, that an indefinite anticlpation had been formed of discovering in the morass a large hummock or island, such as they had described. I was not surprised, therefore, when the "Judge," after returning from the "line" much intigued, reported in a hopeful tone that Dallas had, late in the day, after climbing a lofty cypress, seen, not far in advance, a tract of pine and livecak timber, elevated above the surrounding country. Our enthusiasm had been flagging for the past sixty hours, but this discovery revived it into a heat quite as extraordinary as that which fired heard from his masthead. The evening session by the camp fire was consumed in conjectures and imaginings concerning the existence of high and dry ground in such a region, and the wonder was especially great when it was remembered that the hunters of the woods had never by chance or the ardor of the chase been led in that direction, nor had stumbled upon possible discoveries there awaiting the enterprise of the

A WATERY DES OF REPTILES. Noon found us at the terminus of the "line" which we were eager to extend. But the reader must not suppose that it was as easy going there as it is to walk down Broadway on even the sloppiest day of the thawing season. I found that the 'Judge' had penetrated into a far worse region than that previously explored. The tall, thick growth of cypresses cast a gloom upon the dark waters which languidly licked their feet-a gloom so heavy, so contagious, that it seemed to fill the very soul of the adventurous explorer and to warn him in an mexplicable way worthy to be less curiosity which would lead him still further into this sombre wild. It seemed veritably a desert, for of the massive vegetation there was nothing apparently which could render subsistence to living being. A chill pervaded the atmosphere which crept into our marrow, and the slothful breeze reminded one of the cold sepulchral air which are said to accompany ghosts when they walk on earth. Certain it seem that none of the higher species of vertebrates haunted this strange solitude; not even a warbler was there present to lighten the penderous silence with its cheery chirpings; but on looking were submerged we were startled and horrified by apparitions, to which our depressed and timid imagaspects. A greenish, slippery vegetable substance, haif slime and half moss, carpeted the bottom of the goon, and against it were revealed the crawling shapes of huge moccasins, called because of their ever, have no rattles and give no warning of their proximity. They pass through the water with a rapid

THE PARLED SEA SERPENT

rush when they are angered, coming down upon their

which adores sailors' yarns. As we stood, doubtful what to do, these noxious things never ceased to glide, and their scaly folds seemed to thicken around us. perhaps the corridor of heil, pillared by the ghastly mblems of death-the misty cypresses. Luckily bases of large trees close to us and on these we sprang, and, hastily jumping from one to the other. ed from the reptiles. It was some time before w ventured again into the water, and not before we reached a broad and rapid current. We lumping from mound to mound, or from of the stream, however, it was necessary to again go into the water. We waded in cautiously, and the 'Judge," who was in the van, insured our safety by feeling his ground as he advanced with his faithful

A WATER MONSTER. chins and the current swept against us with alarming strength. It was while nearing the more shallow margin that we espied a huge water reptile, moccasin, ploughing along the surface of the water with great rapidity toward our little party. Jake declared him to be the largest one of the species that he ever had seen. The "Judge," who was nearest the danger, struck at him with desperate vigor with only weapon, the "Jacob's stall." The blow fell short, and the monster never paused in his course, the men then lashed the water with a sappling, which he bore in his hand, but trepidation had so unmanned then stopped and lay on the surface looking at us, with his forked tongue darting menacingly. We could now a short distance he might have been mistaken for a young alligator. I levelled my gun and sent some fine t through his brain. He turned half over and wrig gled and twisted himself into all sorts of knotty shapes. He had not disappeared when we reached the cypresses, having passed very near him. With a lorked pole a noose was slipped over his head and he vitality in him was speedily despatched. He was a immense muscular development, a quality which makes this species so terrible, since they swim so rapidly and strike with the swiftness of a thunderbolt.

Our adventures were not ended with this conquest. Be it known that the alligators of this region are exiremely ferocious and fearless in their relations with man. They have not yet had sufficient intercourse with that monarch of living creatures to respect the resources of his ower . It is different along the streams frequented by tourists. There they mutely acknowledge the powers of gunpowder and lead and dive to avoid observation. Here their self-respect is not yet enough impaired to permit the saurian aristocracy to submit to a foreign domination. And that, too, professed by that upstart genus of the drift period called homus! Were not the alligators descended from those noble creatures who adorned the earth in the dim anterior ages, the phocene, the miocene and the cocene? Why, then, should man object to their choice of him as an occasional morses for their delicate stomachs?

The aligntor of the morasses (crocodilus lucius) attacks man without hesitation, and when once he suc ceeds in coming to close combat with him is nearly

We were crossing stream after stream. They seemed remarkably close to one another, and we became coninced for that reason that we were nearing the main course of the Wacissa, and that they were the numerous delta of larger tributaries seeking an entrauce to the grand highway to the sea. In one of these "runs"

a great cry of terror burst from one of our party, and shakespeare in AMERICA. the first play ever performed on American soil was we hastened back to hun, for he was in the rear, exwe hastened back to him, for he was in the rear, expectant of a scene of horror. There was a violent splashing and eddying of the water, and one of the men was struggling, with cries, to free his leg from the jaws of a youthful crocodilus lucius. He had stabbed it twice with his knife, and it suddenly retaxed its hold, but only to whirl around in the water and with its powerful tail to deal its adversary a terrible blow on the lees which most him. The tragedy would soon the legs which upset him. The tragedy would soon have been complete had not the "Jacob's staft," which figures so benevolently in this narrative, beda again used in defence of the Herald explorers. Its end was shod with steel, sharply pointed, and the "Judge" handled the weapon as if it were a true and trusty lance and he a doughty knight of the mediaval time. It penetrated the ugly saurian's neck, just where his natural armor is jointed, and he turned over on his back with a graceful acquiescence in the force of circumstances which was quite ealtying. The poor ne-gro was examined and his leg found to be but slightly brussed, thanks to the toughness of his trousers and the juvenility of his assailant. He was able to pled on with less physical than moral injury, for his imagplunged into a new stream. He leared to go on, but still less dared to start back for camp. The accident was really a remarkable one, as it is unusual for alligators to show thomselves so early in the season when they are, besides, too torpid to feel very great ambition for conflict. But we had already heard them blowing, as they rose from the water to sun themselves on logs, and the rapidly increasing warmth warned me of the danger of prolonging the explora-

in boats along the Wacissa River. A GROUP OF ISLANDS. great numbers of "runs." When we afterward took the trouble of counting them we found that within a listance of two miles there were not less than thirtyone. Some of them part from the Wacissa, describe a curve through the morass and return to it.

We arrived at a high pine bumfhock, upon which, however, we found nothing remarkable. We named to Piney Island. We only rested here and then pressed onward with an anxiety to finish the line on that day. At last we could plainly discover before us a dense mass of foliage, living and green, which strongly contrasted with the nakedness of the cypress through which we had been toiling for several hours. The trees were of enormous growth. As we approached we crossed another stream, and its further bank was firm What might there he behind that barrier? last the enchanted precinct where abode the mysterious presence of those unexplored wilds? I feit somewhat like the fairy prince of childish memory, perhaps, for

here as in the poem:—
All round a hedge upshoots and shows
At distance like a little wood,
Thorns, tyres, woodbines, mistletoes,
And grapes with bunches red as bloods
All creeping plants, a wall of green
Close matted burr and brake and briar. I looked involuntarily around for-

The bodies and the bones of those Who strove in other days to pass, but they were not

—withered in the thorny close
Or scattered blanching on the grass.
So we took courage and broke through the copse without exactly expecting to find the enchanted castle and "the sleeping beauty" in "the quiet chamber far apart," but something perhaps akin to them in won-

We had reached an island. The interior was thickly shaded by giant live oak and magnolias, which so shut out the rays of the sun that the atmosphere was laden with a dampness like that of some ancient crypt. But it was small and soon explored. Beyond it was another island, not so circumscribed in its limits and apparently mainly covered by pines, although there were scattered over it groups of live oaks and magnolins. We crossed a deep "run" to reach it, and found its soil so much like that of the other that I at once concluded that the first growth of timber, which was probably live oaks and magnelias, had been nce hewn down by the hand of man. It is well known that in Florida a strange phenomenon occurs in for-estry when the primeval growth of timber is destroyed. Should it be pine, the new forest which will spring up will consist of the hard woods, such as oak, bay, magnolla and gum tree, and it is supposed that the pine will succeed these after they have been cut oft. Comparing the age of the pines which we found on the third land with that of the live oaks, I should conclude that the latter are perhaps by two centuries the elder The pines are but weeds when contrasted in their rank overgrowth with the august dignity of years belonging to the original lords of the soil.

The third isl nd seemed several times as large as the other two, and we hastened to push our explorations night by a wonderful discovery, a brief outline of which I have already telegraphed you.

of bramble, shrub and vine, and where a few gigantic oaks cast deep shadows, we were startled to behold a figure bearing a semblance to the human form. The wild fancies of some of the negroes had suggested more than entives in some nook of this region, but they were of course treated as improbable. We were utterly unprepared for the shout which one of them raised. "Look a'hyere! Hyere's a man, sho' 'nough!" "Looks like it's the berry debbil bisself," said another, shrinking back, while all of our dusky assistants showed tokens of awe, if not of fear I approached the grim presence. The resemblance to a human figure was far less apparent upon a near inspection than when viewed at a distance, but still there was altogether quite a verisimilitude.

It is a great stone column, rotund in form. The upper portion has been at some time fashioned into of the eyes, cars, nose and mouth. The substance and those features might have been nearly washed away by the rain within a hundred years or so. The

It is set vertically in the earth, and has probably sunk many feet deeper than it stood when originally erected. Its present height above the ground is about five feet, and by excavation it was found that it ex-tends about four feet beneath. The original altitude of the image was, therefore, in all probability about

On the front, or what appeared to be the front, of the figure we discovered some singular characters, resem-bling scratches rather than graven characters. Part of removed so as to disclose the whole. The hieroglyphs, if such they are, bear no analogy to any of those fathat this opinion may be a mistaken one, in consequence of the unfavorable light which pervaded the

A short distance from the statue, we stumbled upon another column or obelisk. It lay prone on the ground, and had to head-shaped upper portion. If it had ever possessed one it had been broken off and probably destroyed, for we saw near a heap of fine the idol was shaped, or afterward, when its companion was demolished.

day in the morass without communication with the camp. Leaving the Judge and three of the mer to in the morning. I set out with one attendant to return My intention was to send provisions to them early and strange objects which had been discovered.

## FELONIOUS ASSAULT.

James L. Cleaner, a young man residing at No. 35 Mott street, became enraged at Dennis J. McBride, of loaded revolver at him, with the evident intention of shooting. McBride jumped for the weapon and succeeded in grabbing it before its owner could fire. A policeman was called and took Cleaner in custody. At the Tombs Police Court yesterday morning, before Judge Doffy, McBride related the story of the assault, and the prisoner was held in \$1,000 bail to answer.

## ARRESTED FOR ARSON.

Louis Cohen, of No. 14 Essex street, was arrested yesterday on suspicion of setting fire to his apart-ments, damaging the contents to the amount of \$50 having first insured them for \$600.

ART IN THE NEXT CENTURY.

To THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—
Foreigners have not only watched with intense interest the advance of literature in this country, but also the enterprise and progress of our theatres. Half a century ago a paper was published in Paris wherein it was observed that the people of the United States would summon over the sea, at an immense expense, celebrated English actors to perform the plays of excited even more enthusiasm and applause than in those of London. \* \* "And thus this comedian of the age of Elizabeth," the article continues, "this author esteemed so uneducated, who had himself never author esteemed so unconcatoo, who had immost never collected or revised his own works, rapidly composed, as they were, for obscure and rude theatres, will be the chief and model of a school of poetry which shall speak a language diffused over the most flourishing half of a new world." Hackett's "Notes and Comments Upon the Plays and Actors of Shakespeare' were pronounced in England to be among the most in-tellectual that the stage can give a nation. In connection with a review of the theatre in the

United States the visit of George Frederick Cooke to

our shores is, perhaps, the most noteworthy. He made his first appearance as an actor in Breniford, England, in 1776. His arrival in New York in 1810, under contract with an American manager, is said to have caused a greater sensation than had been produced by that of any other individua; not associated with our political welfare it was not believed by Englishmen in New York that there was sufficient enterprise in American theatrical circles to secure his presence; they "swore roundly that it could not be." An account represents that it appeared as impossible to many that the great London actor should be removed to America as that St. Paul's Cathedral should be transported across the Atlantic. But he had already arrived (on November 16) and taken rooms at the Tontine Coffee House. Five house ever known in America." The audience he res garded as one of unusual intelligence, for it most applauded, he said, what he knew to be his own best For seventeen nights the recents delphia, \$22,662 The seating capacities, it may be presumed, limited the proceeds, for on the evenings of his performances in the former city "the press of people in the vicinity of the theatre was violent and was the eagerness to procure tickets that "sturdy blackguards" were paid by gentlemen from \$6 to \$10 for blackguards" were paid by gentlemen from \$6 to \$10 for securing a single seat, and persons were seen sitting at the theatre door eating their dinner, who had taken their posts on Sunday morning with a determination of remaining there all through Sunday and Sunday night to be ready for the opening on Monday. Cooke was a constitutional drunkard; his drinking was a disease, but he possessed unrivalled talents and great kindness of heart. In the words of another, he was eccentric in his conduct and eminent in bis profession. In this country, as in England, while he won the admiration of fashionable, learned and critical audiences he was the joily companion of harroom patrons. It seems to have been painful for one to behold him in the degradation of his habits, but supremely ennebling to witness him aim the glories and triumphs of his genius. "His heart was open to receive every good action." The standpoint taken by professed Christians, as a class, against the theatre he regarded as one of the most deplorable errors of civilization. It is said that the two gentlemen with whom he was most delighted in Buston were the portrait painter, Stuart, and a Rev. Mr. Gardiner. He astonished some friends one Sunday morning by saying, "I am going to hear Parson Gardiner preach le's the only clergyman that has done me the honor to come and see me play, and I'll do him the honor to go and hear him preach. Sam, give me some hot branay toddy." Franght with a felling significance, his words passed into history. Wherever he wont in the United States he observed, with astonishment, the people's fine appreciation of the great poet's plays. In a letter to a London friend he said:—"The stricks here are conducted in a very respectable manner, and the companies superior to what I had expected. I may add much more so."

The tollowing conversation, inbued with interest at

companies superior to what I had expected. I may add much more so."

A SINGULAR CONVERSATION.

The following conversation, imbued with interest at this time from the fact of our Centennial celebration, passed between Cooke and an American:—

Cooke—I observe that you Americans always say, "Our great poet," "Our immortal and unrivalled dramanst;" but you are not the countrymen of Shakespeare. What part has an American in the Bard of Avon?

American—Precisely the same part that an Englishman of the present day can claim in bim. As a descendant from Britons, I claim the same share in the heroes, poets and philosophers of former days as any Briton of this day can.

Cooke—So, so—very pretty! No, no, that won't do. You are a race of yesterday—mere upsterts. You abandoned Great Britain and gave up your share in her fame.

Erected to the memory of GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE,

EDMUND KEAN. Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Three kingdoms claim his birth; Both hemispheres pronounce his worth. Repaired CHARLES KEAN Repaired

E. A. SOTHEEN, Theatre hoyal, 1874.

Cooke's masterly impersonations in the plays of "Richard III..." The Merchant of Venice, ""Othello," "Macbeth, ""Henry IV.," "King Lear," "King John" and others grandly impressed the American public with the moral worth of the drama, and from his time to the present it has welcomed Shakespearian actors from abroad with marked distinction. The ambition of foreign actors now is to appear before and win favor with American audiences. It has finally become proverbial on the other side of the Atlantic that their visus here are not to a land of strangers, but peculiarly to one of friends. The transatiantic professional tours of eminent actors are also productive of friendly feelings of an important international character. Thomas A. Cooper, of New York, who imported Cooke, won celetrity in the character of liamiet, and after George Frederick, and until the arrival of the elder Wallack in 1818, he was a reigning theatrical star and the only one in the Western Hemisphere, Wallack came direct from Brury Lane, at the age of twenty-five. His Hamlet was liked here more than in England, and undoubtedly it was the American estimate that stole the britiant Wallacks from the British stage.

ERRORS OF THE CRURCH.

The career of William Augustus Conway affords a sad commentary upon the course pursued by the clergy. This gentleman withdrew altogether from the London stage and came to the United States to find a home. He had played the most exalted of Shakespeare's characters, and they had taught him such divine trails that in 1826 he determined to study for the ministry. Three years later he met with opposition from Bishop Hobart, of New York, "from the fact that he had been an actor." He then sailed for Savannah in order to obtain from Bishop White permission to "take orders in the Church, yet it has finally risen to an eminence of purity and renown. It now has its little churches "round the corner," where sorrowing friends can bow before holy altars in the presence of ead actors. It also has

"The Merchant of Venica."

RUDSON'S LECTURES.

It was in 1848 that Hadson's lectures on Shakespeare altracted universal attention. Germany could not admit that they were protound, but Gervinus said of them:—"Every critic of Shakespeare will highly rejoice at this American's fine appreciation and estimate of them:—"Every critic of Shakespeare will highly rejoice at this American's fine appreciation and estimate of the poet on the whole." His lectures, however, were exactly what he intended they should be. As an American he seems to have conceived the fact that the duty of a lecturer before the general public is not to impress the profound few, but rether to please, interest and instruct the less intellectual many.

SHAKESPEAIR IN THE NEXT CENTURY.

The first century of American independence will have produced in this country at so distant period in its second a class of profound Shakespearian critics, superior to those of either Germany, England or France. The literature of the colonies partook of a limited and ordinary character; but when the signing of the Declaration of Independence created a new national life—an English speaking people anter a republican form of government—it was destined that a contry hence should find the United States so far advanced in learning as to warrant the belief that the close of its second century will find it the foremost nation of the world, not only in literature, but also in the arts and sciences. I have remarked that it was fitty years ago when Villetnam, of France, sought to account for our rapid strides in these respects. At the time of the inception of the United States, and for many years, he argued, its people had scarcely any other literature than the books of Olid England, and no other national theatre than the picces of Shakespeare. "Therefore the popular good sense of these Americans," he said, "so industrious and so compled, has seved with arround thoughts, the sagaclous maxims with which Shakespeare is filled. His gigantic images please minds accustomed to the mos

NEW YORK, Feb., 1877.

#### JOHN OXENFORD'S RELIQUES.

THE NEW YORK STAGE THROUGH AN ENGLISH OPERA GLASS-OUR BOARDS A DECADE SINCE-POOTLIGHT FLASHES OF THE PAST-EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS TO THE HERADD.

The death in London, on Wednesday last of Mr. John Oxenford, the celebrated dramatic critic for revives an interest in the life of this persifleur of th past. His chief merit was in writing conscientious opinons of good, bad and indifferent plays in the same vein in which he received the impression. He but wisely resolved to make the good dramati critic rather than the bad lawyer. His liter in quantity and have a vast range of subject. What links him particularly with New York is the fact that during the latter part of the year 1867 he contributed while making a visit to this city, some remarkably brilliant theatrical letters to the New York Herald. The subject treated was "The Stage in New York as Seen Through an English Opera Glass." Those letters were signed "By an English Playgoer," and the firs of them bore the date New York, August 10, 1867. It began with the sentence :-

"It is a common remark among the American actors who visited London that the English public is, for the most part, wholly ignorant of the standard by which transatiantic fame is to be measured." After this delicate and most gittering platitude Mr. Oxenford refers to the American artists who at that time were delighting London. Among those mentioned are son, who was doing hip Wan Winkle and Asa Trench ard at another of the London theatres. John E. Owens is also alluded to, and there is a casual mention of the feminine glory with which Mrs. Barney Willlams and her sprightly sister, Mrs. Florence, illumined the boards of the London stage.

THEATRICAL MATTERS IN NEW YORK.

Dassed between Cooke and an American:

COOKE—I observe that you Americans always say, "Our great poet," "Our immortal and unrivalled dramaist." but you are not the countrymen of Shakespeare. What part has an American in the Bard of Avon?

American—Precisely the same part that an Englishman of the present day can claim in him. As a descendant from Britons, I claim the same share in the heroes, poets and philosophers of former days as any Briton of this day can.

Cooke—So, so—very pretty! No, no, that won't do. You are a race of yesterday—mere upstaris. You abandoned Great Britain and gave up your share in her fame.

American—By no means. The younger brether who leaves his parential roof, though he does not inherit his lather's estate, is heir to his lather's fame as much as the elder. I have as full a participation in old English glory as you. Shakespeare and Milton; Locke, Bacon and Newton; the Harries, the Edwards and the Mariboroughs, are as sear to me as to you. And the glory which an Englishman feels at the sound of those names and the recollection of the glory of Old England is mine as fully as his."

Cooke—So, so, so—and where do you draw the line?

American—Why the year 1776 must be the chronological mark of separation, I believe. I have no claim who he mark here is a full than shown the mark of separation, I believe. I have no claim whose littless references the second of the paragraphs to a full, and the provided the paragraphs of Mr. Ovenford's first letter on theatrical matters in New York is as follows:—'The preliminary note may not be superfluous that, theatrically speaking, New York is as follows:—'The preliminary note may not be superfluous that, theatrically speaking, New York is as follows:—'The preliminary note may not be superfluous that, theatrically speaking, New York is as follows:—'The preliminary note may not be superfluous that, theatrically speaking, New York is as follows:—'The preliminary note may not be superfluous that, theatrically speaking, New York is as follows:—'The preliminar One of the striking paragraphs of Mr. Ovenford's

one of the paragraphs in his first fetter speaks of us in an orchestra way as being "decorous to a fault," and mentions the last of our being extremely undemon-strative. At this point he gets off the following unppy antithesis:—"When the Euglish roar the Americans merely smile." strative. At this point he gets off the following unppy antithesis:—"When the Eughish roar the Americans merely smile."

The second gramatic contribution of Mr. Oxenterd bears the date of August 17, 1867. It begins with a comparison of New York to London, and likens Canal street to Temple Bar. While dwelling on the subject of streets he says:—"Near the City Hall Park stands what the writer calls "the palatias office of the New York Herald." Mr. Oxenterd here mentions the Broadway Theatre, which was at that time under the management of Mr. Barney Williams and Mr. Billy Florence. A prece called "The Yankee Gal" was then the rage; it was followed by a very successful performance of Robertson's "Caste." Mr. Oxenterd in this letter compares Niblo's to the Adelphi Theatre, and says apropes of a spectacle which was in its limelight glory auring his visit:—"What is "Bisck Crook?" Nominally it is a drama; but it is so utterly devoid of plot or action that the most daring adversary of the London Albambra would scarcely venture to call it a 'stage play."

Lotta is mentioned as having been playing at Wallack's in "The Pet of the Petiticoats" and "Lattle Nell and the Marchioness." While in the Lotta strain Mr Oxentord wrote as follows:—"Generally, as I have already stated, the andiences of this city are inclined to be grave and apathetic, but the sparking pleasantry damn it, sharply uttered by a Intile mdy who looked scarcely too old for a prinafore, was too much for the Broadway, and drew torth screams of delight."

Our letter writer drops into pleasantry, and alludes rather sarcastically to the habit which the American youth whom he met in New York theatres and of going out to get cloves. He noticed this particularity at the Olympic then called Laura Kene's Theatre, where "Dombey and Son" was being performed. It was at the Olympic the allowed the sperious the way, and also alludes to the fare which destroyed the New Sones favorably of Mr. E. Coleman's personation of Quilp at Wallack's Theatre.

\*\*EKEN GR RAS.\*\*

The third

of his visit to the city.

\*\*REK ON THE BOWERY.\*\*

The subject of lager beer on the Bowery is tapped by our letter writer, and there is quite a gushing description in one of his letters of Atlantic Garden. In the same letter he speaks of Ristori being at the French Theatre, of Mrs. Lander's sway in New York, and of the celebrated suit of Wallack vs. Florence. There are many caustic sentences in this letter which were, no

ways was tempered by his appreciation of us as a people.

THE LAST LETTRE.

This letter is dated, Liverpool, November 6, 1867, and is headed, "The Stage in New York." It is an analytical review of what the gendeman saw of New York theatrical matters, and is thrown into numbered paragraphical statements. We extract freely as follows:—"With the exception of the Bowery the New York theatres, considered as edifices, turnish models which the London architect would do well to imitate, as they are light, commodious, and so arranged as to allow nearly the whole of the andience a good view of the stage. The theatres in London that most resemble them are Astley's, in its present condition, and the small house Highbury Barn. \* \* The New York audiences are for the most part extremely sedate and decorous, and, save at the Bowery, seem devoid of the decidedly plebelan element. \* \* The people of New York are, as a rule, resolute playgoers, like the people of Paris." Mr. Oxenford, after pussing upon the prevalence of the star system in this country, speaks of the Theatre Français as being "In an extremely gented, but somewhat out of the way quarter." In his opinion, there was no chance in New York in 1867 for a dramatist, but every opportunity for a scene painter. He advised us to rewrite old plays and put in this spice of caution, "Don't let King Philip conquer Queen Elizabeth, especially while Cuba belongs to the Spaniards."

## GREAT FIRE IN PHILADELPHIA.

Fox's Theatre Entirely Consumed at One o'Clock in the Morning.

The Mercantile Library Irretrievably Injured.

The Largest Variety Theatre in America and the Largest Library Building-Losses Over \$325,000 -A Fireman Mortally Hurt.

PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 25, 1877. The theatrical business must be at a very low ebb indeed when Saturday night came around without bringing an immense audience to Fox's American Theatre, the great variety show of Philadelphia, scating 5,000 people and giving them more for their money, in point of time at least, than any rival estab-lishment in town. Saturday night was always a great the earliest before the green curtain fell for good, Last night was no exception to the rule. A large and heterogeneous audience and assembled under its lofty dome; the performers had done their best; the crowd had onjoyed themselves and applauded in their usual vigorous fashion; the long bill had been successfully gone through with; the "patrons of the drama" had dispersed to their homes—or somewhere else—and the last member of the company had bid man, as he dragged himself wearily home to bod. The watchman locked the stage door after the departing song and dance man, completed his rounds of the building, set his clock at quarter to one o'clock, and

A PUFF OF SMOKE burst from the property room, situated on the prompter's side, and on a level with the flies. He was the only man in the theatre, and at once turned on the two fire plugs on the stage, and tried to extinguish the flames with a patent fire extinguisher, but his efforts were in vain. In almost less time than it mable stuff on the stage was on fire beyond the hope of saving them. Within a few minutes the fire burst through the root over the stage, and being seen on the streets an alarm was given, which brought the fire engines to the spot. A stiff breeze was blowing from the west, and great golden billows of smoke rolled out toward the front of the theatre on Chestnut street, carrying pieces of burning wood and canvas, which

on roofs and awnings for at least two blocks away. Everything outdoors had been soaked in a twenty-fo hours' rain and snow, which had just ceased falling;

Everything outdoors had been soaked in a twenty-four hours' rain and snow, which had just ceased falling; but this did not prevent the fire bresking out on the roots of a dozen different buildings, while it probably saved the entire block bounded by Tenth, Eleventh, Market and Chestnut streets from total destruction. A general alarm, summoning all the available fire apparatus in the city, was speedly sent, but it was soon evident, in spite of all their efforts, that the conflagration could not be conflued to the theatre.

THE FIRE SPREADS.

The auditorium and stage of the theatre were situated back from Chestnut street, approached by a wide passage about fity feet in length. A barroom and a cigar store were on citier side of this passage way, facing on Chestnut street, and extending back to the front walls of the auditorium. It was one of the curious freaks of the fire that neither of these stores suffered any damage except by water, white buildings immediately adjoining them were injured, and during the fire two barkeepers were kept busy within ten feet of the fiames serving out liquors. Within half an hour after the outbreak of the fire the whole of the theatre was blazing furtously, and the other buildings in the immediate vicinity had become ignited. Next door but one to the theatre, and the first to become ignited, was the large double dwelling and store of 1. C. Love, talior, No. 1,019 Chesinut street. The root of the building caught from sparks, the dames agating the cornice on the front. From this heavy woodwork they spread rapidly over the root, and in a few moments the entire upper portion of the structure was enveloped in a sheet of fire. It was found impossible to bring streams of water to play upon it from the adjoining roots, and in order to overcome the difficulty an extension ladder employed by the department was wheeled in front of the building, from which the firemen played. The flames nere were finally put out before they had done very much damage.

Next to this building on the east was Taylor's drug store, a one story structure. The fire passed this by merely singeing it, and also Milligan's tailor shop adjoining, but the next structure was the large three story and actic building occupied by William D. Rogers as a carriage manufactory. It was undoubtedly because this structure towered above the others that its roof caught life from the clouds of sparks with which the air was filled. It was burning some time before attention was called to it.

The building was filled with inflammable stock. In the attic was wool and hair, on the third floor varnishes, paints, partially completed carriages and similar materials. On the second floor finished carriages and on the first floor were the show rooms to

City Fire Marshal Thompson, George H. Bonnatore, Secretary of the Insurance Patrol, and George Frederick Newman, a Greman in the employ of the Insurance Patrol, were among others in this building, directing the preservation of the carriages. A number were engaged in wheeling out the valuable sale carriages that stood upon the first floor, when a crash was heard overhead, the whole building shock as if rocked by an earthquake, and the people-engaged in the removal fled in terror. In another moment the third floor had crushed in the second, and the contents of both were piled upon the first, with flames darting in all directions, and dozens of costly carriages in runss.

The three men above named were buried in the debris, and for a few moments the widest excitement prevailed among the crowd, it being regarded as almost a certainty that they were killed. The Fire Marshal was dragged out with his face haid open on one side from his forchead to his chin. The gash is an ucly one, but not serious. Mr. Bonnatore was struck on the head by a timber and stuned, being partially unconscious when taken out. He wore a heavy fireman's heimed, which broke the weight of the blow and probably saved his life. Both men were attended by a physician and sent home. The other of the three, Mr. Newman, could not be found, and it was thought that he had perished. At ten o'clock this morning, however, after the Bre had been completely extinguished and a careful search was made, Nowman was cound wedged into the debris, still alive, but very dangerously wounded. He was conveyed to the Penn sylvania Hospital, but will probably die of internal injuries. Several other Bremen were also more or less injured by failing cornices and timbers before the extinguishment of the fire, which was not until after daylight.

the five on the east, but there would have been a dif-ferent story to tell had not the massive granite build-ing of the New York Mutual Lite Insurance Company, on the northwest corner of Teuth and Chestnut streets, stood and defied the further march of the flames.

on the northwest corner of Tenth and Chestnut atreets, stood and defled the further march of the flames.

A GREAT LIBRARY INJUREN.

The southern wail of the Philadeiphia Mercantile Library is directly opposite the rear of the destroyed play-house, separated only by a narrow alley, called Marble street. It is mainly a one sory brick structure, with a high arched roof of iron girders and tin, and is nearly me proof. The library building nobly withistood the rain of fire upon it from the roaring pit of the theatre, but when the rear walls of the theatre feli upon its roof the skylights, with which it was plentifully supplied, were broken in, gave entrance to the flames and burned the interior of the roof from end to end along that side of the building. The glass from the skylights now lies in powder and in finatastic shapes on the floor of the library; but the water, which the flamen poured in in libral quantities to quench the flames on the roof, has done more damage than the fire itself. No books were burned, but the most valuable volumes in the library have been destroyed or injured beyond repair by the water. About 5,000 of the choicest books in the collection were kept in a gallery under the roof mear the roar wall, just in the spot where the greatest damage was done. Here were such volumes as Audubon's "Birds of America," for which the company paid \$1,000; and which its badly damaged, folios with valuable colored prints, in architecture, geography, history and science. Many old and rare veilum covered books now out of print were on these shelves, some of which are now reduced almost to pulp. Some of those destroyed can never be replaced. No estimate of the loss in dollars and cents can, of course, be given under the circumstances until a careful examination is made by an expert. The president of the library, however, made the foliowing statement to the Heralds.—Franklin, \$10,000; Delaware Mutual, \$10,000; Fire Association, \$10,000; Delaware Mutual, \$10,000; Fire Association, \$10,000; Delaware Mutual, \$10,000 pleatifully supplied, were broken in, gave entrance to the finanes and borned the interior of the roof from the finanes and borned the interior of the roof from the door of the fibrary; but the water, shigh the firemen poured in in liberal quantities to quench the flames on the root, has done more damage than the fire itself. No books were burned, but the most valuable volumes in the library have been destroyed or injured beyond repair by the water. About 5,000 of the choicest books in the collection were kept in a gallery under the root mear the roar wall, just in the spot where the greatest damage was done. Here were such volumes as Audub bon's "Birds of America," for which the company paid \$1,000; and which is badly damaged, follos with valuable colored prints, in architecture, geography, metory and science, Many old and rare veilum covered books now out of print were on these shelves, some of which are now reduced almost to pulp. Some of those destroyed can never be replaced. No estimate of the loss in dollars and cents can, of course, be given under the circumstances until a careful examination is made the following statement to the library, however, made the following statement to the library, however, made the following statement to the library, however, made the following amonactier companies:—Franklin, \$1,000; Reliance, \$10,000; American, \$10,000; Heriance, \$10,000; Fire Association, \$1,000; Reliance, \$10,000; American, \$10,000; Heriance, \$10,000; Fire Association, \$1,000; Mills of the lower of the college of the lower of the lower

tr e was consumed except the narroom, the only are cles saved being two trunks belonging to Messra, Zanfretta, of the Zanfretta troupe, who were to have performed at the theatre this week. The box office and treasurer's office were in the lobby spoken of above, which is only injured by water. The safe and contents, being the receipts of several performances, &c., were preserved uninjured by Mr. Harrison, the treasurer. Mr. Wood Benson, the manager for Mr. Fox, was found by the Haralmoore-pondent, to whom he stated that the loss on the theatre would be about \$25,000. Mr. Benson states, concerning the origin of the fire, that it began in the northeast corner of the building, directly back of the paint room, in the flies. The paint room had not been occupied for ten days, the painters having been discharged and the room closed since that time. He could not im any way account for the fire, unless the oils in the paint room had caused spontaneous combustion. Among other articles said to have been lost in this theatre was a valuable painting, which Mr. Fox refused \$20,000 for recently. The building was owned by a company, and it was run by Mr. Fox, who was one of its owners, on shares.

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other articles said to have been lost in this theatre was a valuable painting, which Mr. Fox refused \$20,000 for recently. The building was owned by a company, and it was run by Mr. Fox, who was one of its owners, on shares.

There is a runor on the streets that the theatre was set on fire by an incendiary, having been insured beyond its value. This would appear to be effectually disposed of by Mr. Benson's declaration that the policies only amount to \$50,000, and the building is known to have cost about \$250,000.

THE EMPLOYER'S LOSS.

As usual the actors and actresses suffer severely. There not being one from the lowest to the highost who is not the loser of wardrobe or properties. Alle, Alexandria loses all her handsome dresses and articles of jewelry; Miss Georgie May suffers the loss of all her wardrobe, Miss Jennie Yeaman is a heavy loser; John Pendy lost all his character costumes; Mr. Fitzpatrick, his entire wardrobe; the Zanfretta Pantonime Combination, who were to open this week, is said to have lost all the character costumes; Mr. Fitzpatrick, his entire wardrobe; the Zanfretta Pantonime Combination, who were to open this week, is said to have lost all the three of open this week, is said to have lost all the three properties. But this could not be traced to any reliable source.

Messrs, luce, Forbes, Danvers, Myers and Misses Lee Gordoe, Suise Warren, Coral Leigh and the supernumeraries all lost their wardrobe.

A History of this Trikarric.

The burned building was formerly the Academy of Fine Aria, being changed into a theatre after extensive alterations and preparations by Robert Fox, in 1870, and was opened to the public on Saturday night, December 17, of that year. It was completed at great expense, the cost, as stated by the proprietor, being \$250,000. The building extended from the north side of Chostnut street to Marbia alley, the ground pling giving to the auditorium a space of 108x100 feet, the lobbies, private offices, they have a substantion of the marbia and particular proposed in proper

of artists.

SKETCH OF THE LIBRARY.

The Mercantile Library was founded in 1861, and the building at present occupied was inaugurated on the 15th of July, 1869. It stands on a lot having a front on Tenth street of 96 feet and a depth along Marble street of 301 feet. The whole of this space is covered by the building, except an offset of 16 feet on the south side, loft open, a portion of it as a garden, decorated with fountains and vases, and the remainder as a passage way. After deducting this offset, there still remains an area of over 24,000 square feet on the first floor alone, larger than that of any other library building in America, and nearly double that of the great reading room of the British Museum.

The cost of the new building may be seen from the following statement:—

Total. \$227,261 43

The old eddifics was sold early in the year for \$95,000, a price which the Board considered advantageous to the interests of the company, and a sum nearly double its original cost. A mortgage of \$50,000 had been created prior to the saie, for the purpose of paying in part for the alteration of the new building, leaving \$45,000 to be otherwise provided for. The company accepted for this, a mortgage of \$27,000, payable in two years, amply secured, and a second mortgage on the old building, payable \$10,000 in six months and \$8,000 in one year. MR. FOX'S THEATRICAL EXPERIENCES.
Robert Fox has been for a long time conne

Robert Fox has been for a long time connected with the variety business in this city, and during that time has net with various fortunes. His first connection was with the Casmo, an establishment which was opened for variety performances in the old building which the variety business in this city, and during that time has met with various fortunes. His first connection was with the Casino, an establishment which was opened for variety performances in the old building which been for many years occupied as Jones' Hotel, in Chestnut street, between Sixth and Seventh streets, he was at this piace for some time, but ambitious for a better establishment, he changed his quarters to the old Continental Theatre, in Walnut street, above Eighth. This building had seen many ghanges. It was constructed on a large lot running from Walnut to Sansom streets, which had been occupied in 1831 by Roper's and afterward by Barrett's gymnasium. Raymond & Waring erected the first building there for the purposes of a menageric, and occupied it with their zoological collection for some years, being succeeded by Welch & Lent, and subsequently by General Rulus Welch on his own account. Ballard & Suckney aftered this place for the purposes of a circus, and opened it for equestrian performances on the 3d of December. 1833. After the National Amphitheatre, Chestnut street, east of Ninth—now a portion of the site of the Continental Hotel, and occupied by Welch & Lent—was burned, July 5, 1854, negotiation was made for the Walnut street imangeric. They succeeded Bailard & Stickney, and the house was for some years known as Welch's National Amphitheatre and Circus, it was opened for that purpose July 5, 1854. William Wheatley succeeded General Welch. He tore out the ring, put up a stage, altered the house for dramatic purposes, and opened the house as the Continental Theatre, a speculation which was not fortunate. It was at this house, during Mr. Wheatley's management, that the Gale sisters lost their lives by their dresses taking fire white they were performing on the stage. The house seemed doomed after that, and Mr. Wheatley abandoned it about 1861. Allison & Hincken succeeded and opened the place as a variety theatre in 1862. Mr. Fox ave to the building on Walnut street the name of for six here in th